

## Students as Teachers

—Students from De La Salle University and Waseda University  
play an important role in SEND Program as teachers of  
their own language and culture—

Hieida Bernadette S.

### Abstract

As the main coordinator of SEND Program in our university, I believed that the greatest achievement of this program is to make our students realized their role in the society, and that their age should not be a hindrance to take a lead in getting to know better their own country and be able to confidently share their culture and actively participate in building a mutual understanding not just with Japan but to the whole world. Learning any foreign language goes hand in hand in learning and understanding the culture of the target language as well. I personally believed that a person's ability to sustain a conversation should not be based on how high his/her Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) level but on how much he or she is ready to use the language, equipped with a wider understanding on cultural and traditional differences and apply his or her language proficiency to a decent sustainable communication.

### Keywords

Culture Mutual Understanding Nihongo Buddies

## 1. Brief Overview

De La Salle University Manila is grateful to SEND Program with the partnership of Waseda University because it bridges the limitations of our students who cannot afford to go to Japan and experience the beauty of its country. I can truly say that it was indeed a meaningful and productive two weeks for my students based on the survey we made for this program. Working in SEND program is indeed an additional job for the teacher. In our university, there are only two part time teachers teaching Japanese language. We need extra hours for the consultation and preparation not just to Waseda Students but also to my students who are assigned buddies; and adjusting our lessons that will fit the assigned topic to Waseda students. However, these issues are just minimal if I compare to how it helped me as a teacher which is to be inspired to

improve my craft in teaching, moreover, for my students to experience Japan, in our own country. I do not have to motivate my students to like Japan, or apply for exchange program to Japan, because these are already their reasons why they enroll in Japan Studies Program under International Studies Department of De La Salle University. The major strength of SEND Program is to make the journey of my students in learning the language to be more meaningful. Meaningful because my students learned to appreciate more that learning another language can build more beautiful friendship and an advantage for their career in the future.

## 2. Number of Students Inbound and Outbound

SEND Program	2014	2015	2016
Inbound	5	6	8
Outbound	0	4	0

De La Salle University was only able to send once for the outbound program because of the long vacation of our university in year 2015. There was a transition period on the start of the term from May in the past years to July from 2015, thus students have longer vacation. Aside from some financial concerns, most of our students are discouraged to participate in the program because of the conflict of our academic calendar. However, DLSU welcomes students from Waseda University every year.

## 3. Inbound and Outbound Program

### 3.1 Inbound Program

On each year, there were no major changes on the activities, except that as the program progresses, I gave both students from DLSU and Waseda more freedom in planning the different activities with my supervision. Assigning students to take the lead does not only makes my job easier, but also a learning experience for them because they can execute their ideas in actual environment that develops their collaboration skills. Surprisingly, my students enjoyed their task. It was not perfect but it is a learning and memorable experience for everyone. In the past 3 batch of INBOUND students, DLSU prepared the following activities for Waseda Students.

#### 3.1.1 Nihongo Class Observation

During the first week of the program, Waseda students were given the opportunity to observe the JAPALA classes and see how non-native speaker teacher like me, teaches Japanese language in our country. JAPALA refers to the Japanese language classes in the university. During the class, Waseda students are asked to participate in

conversation practice of the particular lesson of the day, which is really like bringing Japan to my own classroom, according to my students. It makes the learning environment very interactive and alive. My students can promptly practice the expressions with native speakers and discover different culture related facts accidentally while using the language. In between class activities, I engaged students with different activities such as interviews. The following two scenarios are examples on how learning the language and culture occur at the same time in my class.

#### (1) Scenario 1

DLSU Students (DS): 趣味は何ですか。

Waseda Students (WS): 散歩することです。

My students understand the meaning of the word 散歩, but they cannot understand, why it can be a hobby. They thought there is another meaning of 散歩, because none of my students would take strolling or walking around as a hobby. Philippine weather is hot and air pollution especially in our university's area is terrible.

#### (2) Scenario 2

On the other hand, Waseda students also discover Philippine's way of living or culture, for example, in one lesson where we just finished discussing the potential form, we had a class activity, where I assigned WS to a particular job like, driver, teacher, security guard, waitress, ninja, etc. On the other hand, I asked my students to make sentences, looking for these people using the potential forms, like うんてんができますか、速く走れますか、文法がおしえられますか…… But with the following situation:

DS: 立ちながら、寝られますか。(寝ることができますか)

WS cannot understand the sentence and thought that there's a mistake in the vocabulary or the sentence pattern. My students have to explain and defend their answer, by showing a picture, of a security guard, that is really sleeping while standing. (Not a common scene, but it can happen in Philippines)

I personally find these kinds of situations to be a very meaningful and productive because both students are learning the language and culture at the same time, which may not be ordinarily happening in a regular class. These little discoveries should have impact on the better understanding and use of the language.

#### 3.1.2 Introduction of Culture

We held a 'matsuri' event where Waseda students prepared booths, introducing traditional Japanese culture and we entitled it 文化体験ブース: Experience Japan ! Waseda students prepared similar activities every year like:

伝統おもちゃ体験… こま、けんだま、だるまおとし; ちゃんばら; わりばし鉄砲作り  
& 射的; くじ釣り; 浴衣&制服の写真撮影;

By these simple activities, my students learned to appreciate Japan's traditional culture aside from manga and J-pop music. Moreover, it was a discovery for my students that even at this generation, Japanese university students are well

acquainted of their own culture and proud to share and even played with them. This is a realization to my students that even Japan is known to be one of the most modern country and consistently develop new gadgets known all over the world where one can play like Play Station, Nintendo, etc., the generation today was still able to preserve their own culture, through these traditional games. Two batches also taught calligraphy as well in one of our events. On the following year, my students also made an effort in introducing Philippine culture like the traditional games, traditional clothes, among others. My students find the task of researching about Philippine culture more challenging, but at the same time interesting because they themselves discover something new about our own culture.

### 3.1.3 Class observation of International Studies Department lessons

The objective of this activity is for Waseda students to also see how international related courses are being taught in the Philippines, like International Law, Foreign Policy, Japanese Government Policy, Japanese History aside from Japanese Language. Some DLSU professors would ask Waseda students for their own impressions and ideas on the topic, especially as Japanese citizens.

### 3.1.4 City Tour/Out of town Tour

The objective of this activity is not only for Waseda students to experience usual lifestyle of Filipinos like riding a jeepney, going to church on Sundays, eating street foods and also learn another dominant culture of Filipino like eating with bare hands, riding in a local buffalo, among others, but also to find a venue, where both students 'survived' real world experience and use Japanese language in a more relax manner outside the classroom. According to my students, the experience was fun, and made them realize to research more about our country because sometimes they feel shy that they cannot explain or answer questions from Waseda students on certain matter about our own country.

### 3.1.5. Home Visits

On Sundays, some assigned buddies would welcome Waseda students to their own home and have them experience Filipino culture like learning the local language, trying homemade Filipino dishes, and doing activities with their own family members which may be totally different on Japanese culture.

### 3.1.6 Buddy System

Waseda students are paired with 1-2 DLSU students as their buddy. On its first year, there is only 1 buddy per student, but on the following years, buddy was increased with a sempai-kouhai, so that there is a transition from sempai to kouhai on the preparations for the following years. Assigned DLSU students as buddies are those with exchange program experience in Japan, because I believed they know better the needs of Waseda students, especially those who came to Philippines for the first time. Prior to the arrival of Waseda students in Philippines, both students have already

consulted each other using email or social networking sites like the clothes to bring, certain money issues, among others.

### 3.1.7 Nihongo demo lesson

As for the demo teaching at first I felt uncomfortable advising Japanese native speakers how to teach Japanese language. However, with this experience, it made me realize the reality, that indeed not all native speakers Filipinos can teach Filipino language. I can speak Filipino but I cannot teach Filipino in a classroom setting. It is the same thing for these Waseda students who are native speakers, but are not Nihongo teachers. With this program I was able to rediscover my strengths and weakness as a teacher. I was once a student, thus, I must admit that when I prepare for my class, I would incorporate ideas and strategies in teaching based on my experience as a Filipino learner (being a non-native speaker or foreign language learner of Japanese language. For example, in explaining some sentence patterns, I would compare it with our native language which is Filipino or English which we commonly use in the Philippines, so students can have better understanding on the usage rather than depend solely in the explanation of our textbook. I was able to share what I learned in teacher training programs I have attended as foreign Japanese language teacher. For example, holding the flashcards or showing the photo panel, what are the things to include in every slide of PPT, giving instructions in activities, giving of examples, etc. Although Waseda students prepared for their assigned lesson independently, we conducted few consultation and I gave them advice on the activities, their PPT slides, time and class management, and interaction with students. After their demo teaching, I also gave them feedback of their strengths and weaknesses. I understand that not all of them want to be a teacher of Japanese language in the future, but interaction with variety of people and making a presentation, is something that I believed is very important in whatever field they will pursue. It is my hope that this kind of experience can help and be useful to them in the future. Of course, the Waseda students have their strengths also which is specifically their interactive way of teaching, and what my students enjoyed most. This is something that I am also reminded in my teaching. As a teacher, we are bound with the curriculum that we have to follow in the university, and with the tight schedule we have every term, sometimes I neglect to make an interactive fun class and focus on finishing the required lessons. Seeing how my students appreciate more the Japanese language with variety of activities, inspired me to find better ways to have an enjoyable and fun class environment.

## 3.2 Outbound Program

Unfortunately we were only able to send four students once in 2015, because of some financial concerns and conflict of academic calendar.

In 2015, interested students were able to apply for the Spring program because of the long vacation, due to the transition period of our university's academic calendar from May to July.

I am grateful that financial assistance in terms of lifting the dormitory fee for students was provided. This kind of assistance was very helpful to our students to lessen the financial concern.

According to students feedback, the program in general was good because they can immediately use what they learned inside the classroom. For instance, one student mentioned that although the dormitory provided was quite far from the university, they learned to take public transportation in spite of challenges on the complicated lines of train stations and time schedule. They learned to make the necessary adjustment especially how to value each minute and each cent of their allowance by taking routes that is cheaper, or simply taking a walk. In Philippines, we usually take jeepney or tricycle even just for a short distance. Surprisingly, majority of the students find the Nihongo classes easy, and they hope that it could have been more intensive or advance since some lessons were taught or they have learned already in Philippines. DLSU Students also mentioned that buddy system or any events where both Waseda students and DLSU students or any other students participating in this program can have a venue or activity together, just like the INBOUND Program in DLSU.

(ひえいだ べるなでつと デ・ラ・サール大学国際学部)